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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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#### CALSPAN CORPORATION

Accident Research Section
New York 14225

# CALSPAN LIMITED ON-SITE AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT INVESTIGATION CASE NO. 90-19

FLEET - 1990 FORD TAURUS GL STATION WAGON

LOCATION - NY

ACCIDENT DATE - 1990

Contract No. DTNH22-87-C-07169

### Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Washington, D.C. 20590

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The crash investigation process is an inexact science which requires that physical evidence such as skid marks, vehicular damage measurements, and occupant contact points are coupled with the investigator's expert knowledge and experience of vehicle dynamics and occupant kinematics in order to determine the pre-crash, crash, and post-crash movements of involved vehicles and occupants.

Because each crash is a unique sequence of events, generalized conclusions cannot be made concerning the crashworthiness performance of the involved vehicle(s) or their safety systems.

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#### TECHNICAL REPORT STANDARD TITLE PAGE

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| Limited on-site investigation of an air bag deployment crash that involved a 1990 Ford Taurus station wagon.  |                    |                           |                        |                 |  |
| 16. Abstract This limited on-s  | ite investiga      | tive report focu          | ses on a 1990          | Ford Taurus     |  |
| station wagon that impacted the rear of a 1979 Pontiac. The Pontiac stopped suddenly in preparation for a left turn into a shopping plaza. The 12 o'clock/6 o'clock impact configuration resulted in a sufficient longitudinal deceleration to deploy the Ford Taurus' driver air bag system.  The 54 year old female driver of the Ford Taurus was wearing the active 3-point lap and shoulder belt system. At impact, she moved forward in response to the frontal impact and loaded the deployed air bag with her facial area. Her contact with the air bag resulted in a 1 cm abrasion of the chin, swelling of the lips, abrasions of both cheeks with surrounding hematoma, and a forehead abrasion. The air bag displaced and fractured the driver's eyeglasses (graphite type material) into numerous pieces. The eyeglass lenses remained intact; however, they resulted in hematoma and contusion of both upper and lower eyelids. The fractured frames produced three lacerations of the forehead located above the eyebrows and bridge of the nose. Lip stick and makeup transfers evidenced the driver's contact with the air bag at the 8:30 - 10 o'clock position.  The driver's husband inspected the air bag module assembly and noted generant residue on the inside surface of the bag at the 6:30 to 7:30 o'clock position adjacent to the inflator assembly. He suspected a burn-through of the filtering media at this position which he believed resulted in an asymmetrical (lopsided) deployment of the driver air bag.  The Accident Research Team inspected the deployed module of a crash test 1990 |                    |                           |                        |                 |  |
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Ford Taurus and found similar deposits inside the air bag. Upon review of the crash test film for this vehicle, the air bag deployed in a normal, symmetrical sequence.

#### CALSPAN LIMITED ON-SITE AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT INVESTIGATION

CALSPAN CASE NO. 90-19

FLEET - 1990 FORD TAURUS STATION WAGON LOCATION - NY

#### SUMMARY

This limited on-site investigation involved the inspection of the deployed air bag module assembly from a 1990 Ford Taurus that was involved in a front to rear impact sequence with a 1979 Pontiac. The crash occurred on a state route in the NY on 1990, at the hours. The Ford Taurus was traveling in a northerly direction behind the Pontiac at a driver estimated speed of 30 mph. The driver of the Pontiac stopped suddenly in the northbound travel lane in preparation for a left turn into a shopping plaza. The driver of the Ford Taurus braked in an attempt to avoid impact; however, her vehicle continued forward and impacted the rear of the Pontiac.

The full frontal area of the Ford Taurus impacted the rear of the Pontiac resulting in respective impact forces of 12 and 6 o'clock. The impact displaced the Ford's front bumper and crushed the headlight and grille area of the vehicle. The impact induced deceleration was of sufficient magnitude to deploy the vehicle's driver air bag system.

The driver of the Ford Taurus was a 54 year old female, 65", 122 lbs. She was wearing the active 3-point lap and shoulder belt system. At impact, she was in a normal seated position with both hands on the steering wheel rim. She responded to the 12 o'clock impact force by initiating a forward trajectory and loading the active belt system. Her head moved forward and slightly downward due to the active belt loading and contacted the deployed air bag. The air bag contact resulted in abrasions with surrounding hematomas of both cheeks, a 1 cm abrasion of the chin, swelling of the lips and an abrasion of the mid forehead area. The air bag also displaced and fractured the driver's eyeglass frames (graphite type frames) into a minimum of 9 pieces. The plastic lenses separated from the frames and probably contacted the eye area of the driver resulting in bilateral contusions with hematoma of the upper and lower eyelids. The frame fragments produced 2 semilunar .5" lacerations of the forehead, between the eyebrows and a 2 cm vertical laceration of the mid forehead. The driver also sustained posterior neck pain that probably resulted from the impact force and subsequent air bag contact.

The driver's facial contact with the deployed air bag was located at the 8:45 - 10 o'clock position of the bag. Facial contact was evidenced by lipstick transfers and makeup deposits that were located 6.5" - 12.25" left of the bag's centerline.

The right front passenger of the Ford Taurus was a 14 year old male, 61", 100 lbs. He was also wearing the active 3-point lap and shoulder belt system. The passenger moved forward at impact and loaded the active belt

webbing which prevented him from contact with interior components and possible injury. He did note a dust-like substance within the vehicle immediately following the crash. The passenger also related to the driver's husband that he noticed a smoke-like ring exhaust from the deployed air bag.

The driver's husband was concerned by the severity of his wife's facial injuries and also of the location of the lipstick transfers on the air bag. Following the repair of the vehicle, he retained the air bag module assembly. The husband inspected the inside surface of the air bag by looking through the right venting port with a small flashlight inserted into the left vent port. He noted generant residue deposits on the inside of the bag adjacent to the inflator assembly and therefore suspected a burn-through of the filtering media that possibly resulted in an asymmetrical (lopsided) deployment. The husband and provided for Motor Co. who sent two representatives to his residence to inspect the module assembly. Following an inspection of the module assembly, the representatives concluded that the air bag deployed properly. The driver's husband subsequently contacted the NHTSA regarding his findings and theory of the air bag deployment.

Calspan conducted an on-site inspection of the module assembly on and verified the location of the facial transfers and internal generant residue deposit. The internal generant residue deposit was located at the 6:30 - 7:30 o'clock position on the neopreme lining adjacent to the steel inflator unit. The residue also covered 3 orange stitches that the husband initially reported as burned away. There was also a small deposit of residue on the filtering screen at the 4 o'clock position. No screen material at the inflator ports was burned or deformed.

Calspan personnel inspected the module assembly of a similar 1990 Ford Taurus that was crash tested for the NHTSA at Calspan. Similar residue deposits were also visible on the bag lining at the 2-3 o'clock position and also at the 8 o'clock position. A frame-by-frame review of the crash test film indicated that the air bag deployed in a normal, symmetrical sequence.

The driver of the accident involved Ford Taurus probably turned her head to the left immediately prior to impact, therefore initially contacting the left side of the deployed air bag.

The 1990 Ford Taurus was within the population of the TRW air bag recall for defective thread joints between the initiator assembly and the inflator housing. The deployed air bag module, however, was not one of the defective units.

#### CALSPAN LIMITED ON-SITE AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT INVESTIGATION

CALSPAN CASE NO. 90-19

FLEET - 1990 FORD TAURUS STATION WAGON

LOCATION - NY ACCIDENT DATE - 1990

ACCIDENT DATA

Location/Street: State route

City/Township: NY

Area/Type: Urban/Commercial

Accident Date/Time: 1990, hours

Investigating Police
Agency:

Accident Type: Car/Car, front to rear impact configuration

Police

Air Bag Vehicle Driver - Minor (AIS-1)
Occupant Injury Severity: Passenger - Not injured

AMBIENCE

Light Conditions: Daylight

Weather: Overcast

Precipitation: Rain

Road Surface: Wet

HIGHWAY

Location: State route

Number of Lanes: 2

Surface: Asphalt

Vertical Alignment: Level

Horizontal Alignment: Right curve

Traffic Density: Moderate to heavy

-----,

Speed Limit: 40 mph

Traffic Controls: None

VEHICLES

Air Bag Vehicle

Vehicle #2

Year:

1990

1979

Make:

Ford

Pontiac

Model:

Taurus

Body Style:

Station wagon

4 dr.

V.I.N.:

1FACP57UXL

Mileage:

9,386

Windshield Damage/Source:

Not damaged

Fleet:

Private vehicle

Tow Status:

Towed from scene

N/A, driven from scene

Previous Repairs:

None

Unknown

#### VEHICLE DAMAGE

#### Deployment Impact

Object Struck:

Vehicle #2

Event Number:

Damage Location:

Front, distributed

Rear, distributed

CDC:

12-FDEW-1 (estimated, vehicle repaired)

06-BDEW-1

Estimated Maximum Crush:

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown

Damaged Components:

Front bumper and bumper facia, bumper energy absorbing units, grille, header panel, headlight assemblies, hood and left front fender (hood and fender were repaired

and not replaced)

Repair Estimate:

\$4715.76 inclusive of driver

air bag module and front

crash sensors

Interior (Air Bag

Vehicle):

None reported

#### COLLISION SEQUENCE

Pre-Crash:

The air bag equipped 1990 Ford Taurus station wagon was traveling in a northerly direction on the state route at a driver estimated travel speed of 30 mph. Vehicle #2, a 1979 Pontiac, was traveling ahead of the Ford as the vehicles approached a shopping plaza. The driver of vehicle #2 reportedly stopped suddenly in preparation for a left turn into the shopping plaza. The driver of the Ford Taurus noted the brakelights of the Pontiac, but did not detect a left turn signal. She subsequently braked in an attempt to avoid impact with the rear of the Pontiac.

Crash:

The full frontal area of the Ford Taurus impacted the rear of the 1979 Pontiac resulting in a 12 o'clock/ 6 o'clock impact configuration. The driver of the Ford estimated her impact speed at 15 mph. The distributed frontal impact sequence displaced the Ford's front bumper and fractured the headlight assemblies and grille of the Taurus. As a result, the vehicle sustained a sufficient longitudinal deceleration required to deploy the supplemental driver air bag system.

The belted driver of the Ford Taurus loaded the deployed air bag with her face, sustaining multiple abrasions. The contact also fractured her eyeglasses which lacerated her forehead. The belted right front passenger of the vehicle was not injured.

The right front passenger noted a dust-like substance within the vehicle as it came to rest. He further stated that he noted smoke rings exhausting from the venting ports of the deflated air bag.

Post-Crash:

Final Rest -

The involved vehicles came to rest near the point of impact, facing in a northerly direction.

Driver Activities - The driver of the Ford Taurus remained in her vehicle following the crash and waited for police and rescue personnel to arrive on-scene.

Police Activities - The Police dispatched a patrol vehicle to the accident scene. Following the officer's investigation of the crash, he issued traffic summonses to both drivers. The driver of the air bag vehicle was charged with following too closely while the driver of vehicle #2 was charged with driving while intoxicated.

Rescue Activities - A rescue unit from a local fire company responded to the accident scene. Rescue personnel initially treated the driver of the Ford Taurus in her vehicle. They subsequently removed her from the vehicle on a backboard and transported her to a for treatment of her injuries.

#### COLLISION SEQUENCE (CONT'D.)

Post-Crash (Cont'd.):

Scene Clearance - The Ford Taurus was left abandoned at the accident scene. The vehicle was later towed from the scene by a local auto body repair shop that subsequently repaired the vehicle.

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air bag contact

DRIVER DATA

Air Bag Vehicle #2

Age: 54

Sex: Female Male

Height: 65"

Weight: 122 lbs.

Active Restraint 3-point lap and shoulder

System Usage: belt system

Usage Source: Husband interview

Eyeglasses: Graphite framed

prescription eyeglasses with plastic lenses, frames fractured into 9 pieces

Vehicle Familiarity: 9 months, this driver

was the primary driver

of the vehicle

Route Familiarity: Weekly

Trip Plan: Unknown

Manner of Leaving Scene: Ambulance

Type of Medical Treatment: Treated at a local hospital

for her injuries and released

DRIVER INJURIES

both upper and lower eyelids

Injury Severity (OIC/AIS) Source 2 cm vertical laceration Minor (FSLI-1) Fractured eyeglass frames/ of the mid forehead air bag 2 semilunar 1/2" lacerations at Minor (FSLI-1) Fractured eyeglass frames/ the medial end of the eyebrows air bag Abrasion surrounding Minor (FSAI-1) Air bag forehead lacerations Hematoma and contusion of Minor (FLCO-1, Eyeglass lenses/

FRCO-1)

#### DRIVER INJURIES (CONT'D.)

| Injury   | Severity (OIC/AIS)                     | Source                           |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Abrasions of both cheeks with surrounding hematoma | Minor (FLAI-1, FRAI-1, FLCI-1, FRCI-1) | Air bag                          |
| 1 cm abrasion of the chin                          | Minor (AIS-1)                          | Air bag                          |
| Swelling of the upper and lower lips               | N/A                                    | Air bag                          |
| Neck pain, arthritic condition                     | N/A                                    | Impact force/<br>air bag contact |

#### DRIVER KINEMATICS

The driver of the Ford Taurus was in a normal seated position at impact with both hands on the steering wheel rim. She was fully restrained by the active 3-point lap and shoulder belt system. Belt usage was determined from interview data obtained from the driver's husband and from blood stains on the shoulder belt webbing. The driver was wearing prescription eyeglasses that were composed of graphite-type frames and plastic lenses.

At impact, the supplemental driver air bag system deployed. The driver initiated a forward trajectory in response to the frontal impact sequence. The active belt system restricted the forward movement of the driver's body; however, her head continued forward and slightly downward. Her face contacted the deployed air bag at the 8:45 - 10 o'clock position, depositing lipstick transfers and makeup deposits 6.5 - 12.25" left of the bag's centerline. The location of the makeup transfers indicate that the driver probably turned her head to the left at or immediately prior to impact.

The driver's contact with the deployed air bag resulted in a 1 cm abrasion of the chin, swelling of the upper and lower lips, abrasions of both cheeks with surrounding hematoma, and a mid forehead abrasion. The air bag contact displaced and fractured the driver's eyeglass frames into 9 pieces. The plastic lenses separated from the fractured frames and were probably compressed into the eye socket area resulting in contusions with hematoma of the upper and lower eyelids bilaterally. The fractured frames were displaced upward into the driver's forehead resulting in 2 semilunar .5" lacerations at the medial end of the eyebrows and a 2 cm vertical laceration of the midforehead. She also sustained posterior neck pain from the impact force and air bag contact.

The driver was removed from the vehicle on a backboard by rescue personnel and transported to a for treatment of her injuries. The forehead lacerations required 9 sutures to close the wounds. She was released from the hospital following treatment.

The sutures were removed on the sutures. The doctor who removed the sutures noted on his report that she also sustained caustic burns with reddened areas of the face from contact with air bag propellant. All facial injuries were identified as abrasions on the emergency room report following her initial treatment. The air bag was intact and was vented by the two ports located on the module (back) side of the bag, away from the driver, therefore eliminating the possibility of facial burns.

#### PASSENGER DATA

Age:

14

Sex:

Male

Height:

61"

Weight:

100 lbs.

Seated Position:

Right front

Active Restraint

3-point lap and

System Usage:

shoulder belt system

Usage Source:

Interview data, police report

Type of Medical Treatment:

N/A, not injured

#### PASSENGER INJURIES

Injury

Severity (OIC/AIS)

Source

Not injured

N/A

N/A

#### PASSENGER KINEMATICS

The right front passenger of the Ford Taurus was probably in a normal seated position at impact. He was wearing the active 3-point lap and shoulder belt system. At impact, he moved forward and loaded the active belt system which prevented him from contact with interior components and possible injury.

#### AIR BAG SYSTEM

The 1990 Ford Taurus was equipped with a supplemental driver air bag system that deployed as a result of the vehicle's frontal impact sequence with the rear of a 1979 Pontiac. The belted driver of the Ford sustained multiple abrasions with hematoma of the face and swelling of the lips, nose, and eye areas from air bag contact. The air bag also fractured the driver's eyeglass frames which lacerated her forehead requiring 9 sutures.

The driver's initial contact with the deployed air bag was located at the 8:45 - 10 o'clock position of the bag. A lipstick transfer was located 9 - 11.25" left of center and .25 - 1.75" below the horizontal centerline of the air bag. A faint continuation of the lipstick transfer extended to the center (tether reinforcement) area of the bag. An oblong makeup deposit was located 6.5 - 12.25" left of center which extended .25 - 3.0" above the horizontal centerline. There was also a faint crossing pattern that appeared to be a lipstick transfer that was centered 8.25" left and 4.75" above the horizontal centerline. This transfer probably occurred post-crash as the bag deflated. Blood spatters were noted to both sides of the air bag as the driver remained in her vehicle following impact.

## AIR BAG SYSTEM (CONT'D.)

The driver's husband suspected a malfunction of the air bag system based on the severity of his wife's injuries and the location of her initial contact with the bag. Following the repair of the vehicle, he retained and inspected the air bag module assembly by inserting a flashlight into the left venting port and sighting through the right vent port at the inflator assembly. He observed a generant residue deposit on the inside surface of the bag material at approximately the 9 o'clock position. He reported that the residue also appeared to have burned through 3 orange stitches that were located immediately outboard of the inflator assembly. Based on the residue deposit, the husband suspected a burn-through of the cooling filter at the 9 o'clock position. He further theorized that if the filter failed at this position, a rush of hot gas could have entered the bag through this port resulting in an asymmetrical (lopsided) deployment, with the left side of the bag deploying more rapidly than the right side. The husband stated that the asymmetrical deployment theory would explain the location of the driver's facial contact with the bag and severity of her injuries.

A Calspan representative inspected the air bag module assembly with the driver's husband at their residence on 1990. Using a similar inspection method with a flashlight and viewing through the right venting port, the residue deposit was visible on the inside surface of the air bag immediately outboard of the inflator. The deposit was, however, located at the 6:30 - 7:30 o'clock position on the bag material and at 5:30 - 7:30 on the steel inflator housing. The residue also covered the three orange stitches previously mentioned. The stitches were in place and were not burned through or missing. The remainder of the interior surface of the air bag was clean, with no deposits or discoloration.

The filter screen of the inflator port at the 4 o'clock position contained a deposit of generant residue; however, the filter was intact with no visible (exterior) burn-through. The internal deposits were located approximately 45 - 75° counterclockwise or below the husband's original reported positions.

The Calspan representative also inspected the air bag module assembly of a similar 1990 Ford Taurus that was crash tested at Calspan under contract to the NHTSA. Using the similar inspection process of the internal air bag surface and inflator assembly, generant residue deposits were visible on the bag material at the 2-3 o'clock position and also at the 8 o'clock position. Heavy generant deposits were also visible on the filter screen at the 2-3 o'clock position with no visible burnthrough of the screen material. The 16 mm film of the test was reviewed frame by frame and the deployment sequence of the bag was closely observed. Following numerous reviews, the air bag appeared to have deployed in a normal, symmetrical sequence.

Based on the limited data that was available for this investigation (i.e., visual inspection of the air bag module assembly and driver injury data), it is difficult to prove or disprove that the air bag deployed in a normal symmetrical sequence. The crash test vehicle's module yielded heavier generant deposits; however, the film review supported a normal symmetrical deployment for that vehicle. It is also probable that the driver turned her head and/or body to the left immediately prior to impact as a reaction to the impending collision. This movement would certainly support facial contact with the left area of the deployed air bag.

# SELECTED PRINTS



Frontal View Of The Repaired Ford Taurus



Left Front Three-Quarter View Of The Vehicle



Perpendicular View Across The Radiator Support Panel



Left Front Door Mounted Identification Label



Overall View Of The Interior Of The Ford Taurus



Replaced Driver Air Bag Module



Deployed Driver Air Bag



Lip Stick Transfer On The Air Bag At The 8:30 Position



Lip Stick Transfers Fade At The Tether Reinforcement Stitching



Makeup Transfers Above The Lip Stick

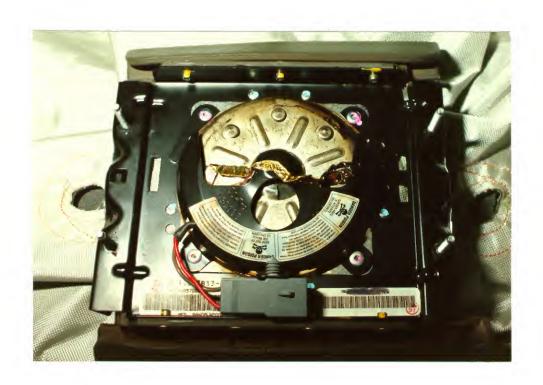




Generant Residue Deposits On The Inside Surface Of The Air Bag Adjacent To The Inflator Assembly At The 6:30 - 7:30 O'Clock Position



Posterior View Of The Air Bag And Inflator Assembly



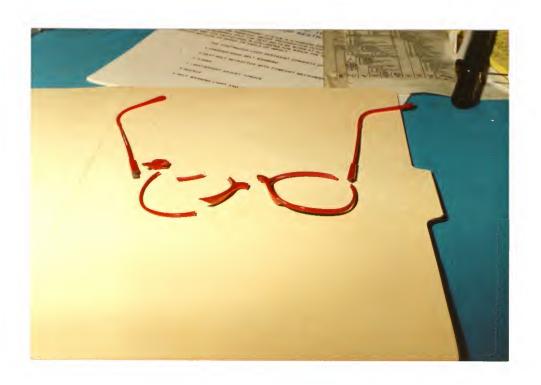
Close Up View Of The Inflator





Offset Views Of The Inflator Assembly





Fractured Driver's Eyeglass Frames, Graphite Material

#### SHI'S INTE

| <u>Slide 'o s).</u> | Bescription   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1                   | Priver Injury mannequin   |
| 2                   | Reployed driver air bag   |
| 3-7                 | Lip stick and makeup transfers on air bag   |
| \$                  | Left air bag vent port  |
| 9                   | Right air bag vent port   |
| 10,11               | Generant residue on inside surface of air had adjacent to inflator at the 6:30 - 7:30 o'clos position |
| 12                  | Posterior view of the module assembly   |
| 13 11               | Driver's fractured evenlass frames  |

Forehead lacerations were surrounded by abrasion (Al5-1), air bag contact

2 semilumar -5" lacerations at the medial end of the 2 cm vertical laceration of the mld forehead area (AlS-1), eyeglass frames/air bag contact



Hematoma and contusion of both upper and lower eyellds (Al -1), eyeglass lenses/ air bag contact

Abrasion of both cheeks with surrounding hematoms (AIS-1), air bag contait

Swelling of the

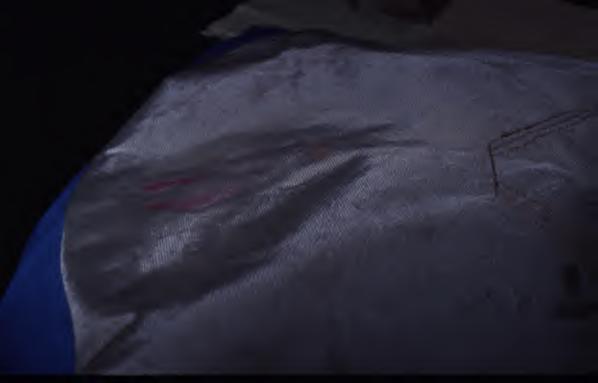
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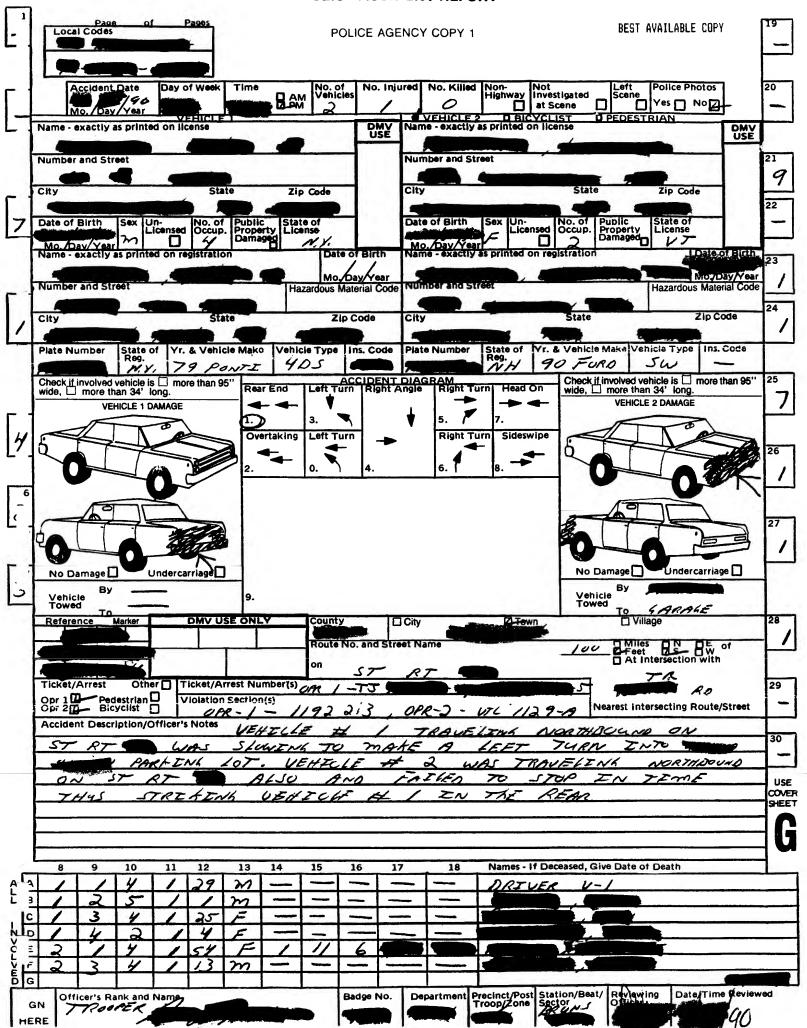




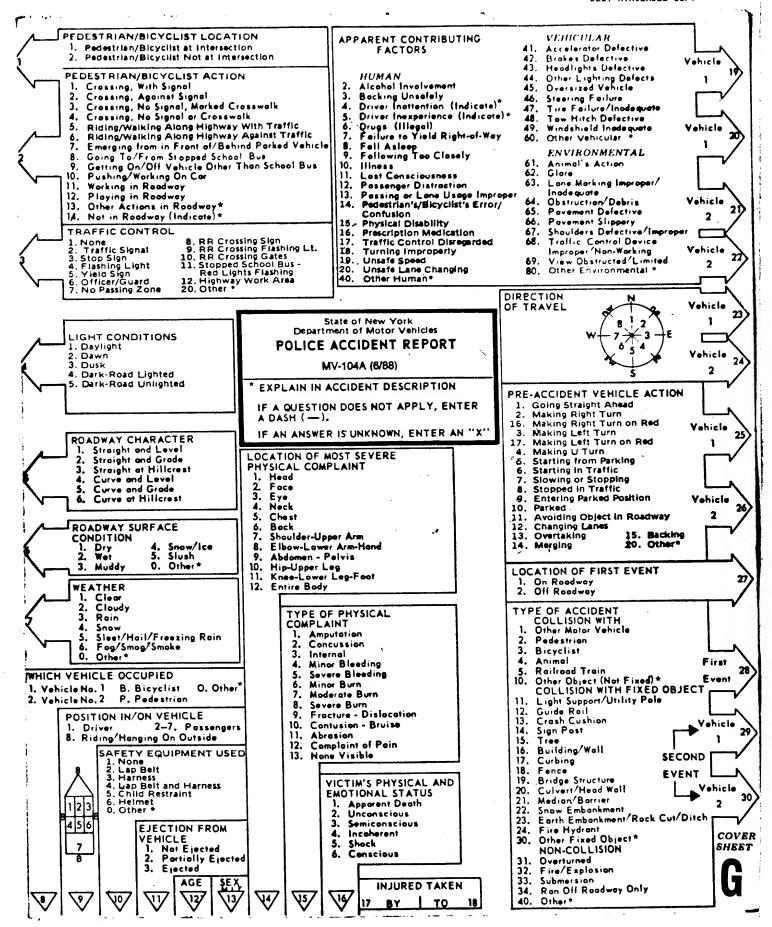


# APPENDIX A

Police Accident Report



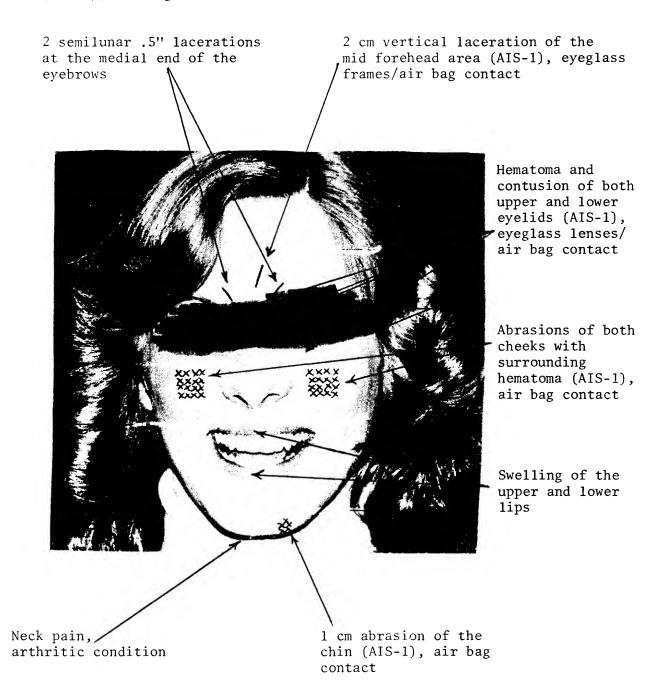
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# APPENDIX B

Air Bag Driver Injury Mannequin

Forehead lacerations were surrounded by abrasion (AIS-1), air bag contact



# APPENDIX C

Air Bag Contact Schematic

